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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 21 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)
(Vice-President)

CONTENTS

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (continued):

(b) FRESHWATER, INCLUDING CLEAN AND SAFE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION (continued)

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued):

(h) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

(i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (continued)

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CONTENTS (continued)

(a) REPORTS OF COORDINATION BODIES

(f) PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999

REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES (continued)

(a) ECONOMIC QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (agenda item 4) (continued):

(b) FRESHWATER, INCLUDING CLEAN AND SAFE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION (continued)

Draft agreed conclusions contained in document E/1997/L.40

Mrs. KELLY (Secretariat of the Council) said that, in the third paragraph of the draft agreed conclusions, the part of the second sentence from "a dialogue" to "in natural ecosystems", and the part of the third sentence from "this intergovernmental process" to "the initiative" should be placed in inverted commas.

Mrs. KIRSCH (Luxembourg), drawing the attention of the members of the Council to another correction to the draft agreed conclusions, said that the last sentence of the text should read: "The work of the organizations of the United Nations system must be carried out taking into account chapter 18 of Agenda 21 and other relevant chapters contained in that document".

The PRESIDENT said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Council adopted the draft agreed conclusions as orally amended.

It was so decided .

Mrs. KIRSCH (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union had joined the consensus because the fact that one fifth of the world's population lacked access to drinking water and more than half had no access to sanitation meant that coordination within the system had to be strengthened. Taking the view that the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had to be carefully prepared, it welcomed the fact that the Council urged the ACC Subcommittee to analyse in detail the activities currently being carried out by the organizations of the system and to prepare a report by the end of 1997. It would have liked the Council to emphasize that the activities of the United Nations system relating to water should not be carried out in a vacuum and to confirm the importance of coordination with the other international organizations, for example, within

the Global Water Partnership and the Global Water Council. It regretted that no consensus had been reached on the concept of partnership. It would participate actively in preparations for the Commission's sixth session.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 6)(continued):

(h) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (E/1997/L.38)

The PRESIDENT invited the Russian delegation to introduce draft resolution E/1997/L.38 entitled "United Nations University".

Mr. NEBYENZIA (Russian Federation) said that the purpose of the draft resolution was to lighten the Council's agenda and to make progress in implementing General Assembly resolution 50/227. The Council would recommend that the General Assembly should adopt a decision whereby, beginning in 1998, the report of the United Nations University would be considered directly by the Second Committee of the General Assembly.

(i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (continued) (E/1997/L.32)

The PRESIDENT invited the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution E/1997/L.32 entitled "Proclamation of international years".

Mr. NEBYENZIA (Russian Federation) said that the purpose of the draft resolution was also to lighten and rationalize the Council's agenda in conformity with paragraphs 66 and 67 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227. The purpose of the resolution was not to dispute the aims of the international years proposed, but to ensure that the issue would be dealt with directly, as from 1998, by the relevant committees of the General Assembly. Under the draft resolution, the Council would recommend that the General Assembly should adopt a decision along those lines and that the guidelines for future international years should remain applicable, as appropriate.

The PRESIDENT invited the representative of Japan to introduce draft resolution E/1997/L.24/Rev.1 entitled "International Year of Volunteers: 2001".

Mr. HAYASHI (Japan) said that there were 49 sponsors of the draft resolution under consideration, to which Denmark, Ecuador, Israel, Namibia, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal and Swaziland should be added. He emphasized that the draft was fully in keeping with the guidelines on international years. Noting that the idea of proclaiming an international year of volunteers was

receiving increasing support and would make it possible to highlight the significant contribution by volunteers in the field and their complementary role in development, he invited all delegations to endorse the draft resolution and to ensure that preparations for the Year could begin as soon as possible.

(a) REPORTS OF COORDINATION BODIES

(f) PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (A/52/16, E/1997/54)

Mr. STOCKIL (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC)), introducing the report of CPC on the work of its thirty-seventh session (A/52/16), said that, at its resumed organizational session, the Committee would decide whether to reconsider those sections of the proposed programme budget that would be affected by the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General on the basis of the revised estimates that the Secretary-General would submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. At its thirty-seventh session, the Committee had noted that the programme budget appeared to be consistent with the outline approved by the General Assembly and reflected the structure of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had also noted that the total amount of resources requested was significantly lower than the revised appropriations for 1996-1997 and had taken note of the assurances that such a reduction would in no way affect the full implementation of all mandated activities during the biennium 1998-1999. The Committee had considered 36 sections and subsections of the programme budget and had been able to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of the programme narratives of the sections listed in its report, with some modifications. The Committee had been unable to make recommendations on section 11B, as the programme of work of the International Trade Centre (ITC) for the biennium 1998-1999 had not been available, but it had taken note of the statement by the representative of the Secretariat that a revised section 11B would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Committee had been unable to reach an agreement to recommend that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative in section 22 (Human rights) and had accordingly recommended that the General Assembly should consider that narrative paying due attention to the observations made by delegations. Moreover, in the absence of a consensus, it

had decided to take note of the programme narrative of section 26 (Public information), subject to further consideration. In connection with section 27 (Administrative services), it had noted with regret that it had not been provided with budget sections 27C (Human resources management) and 27E (Conference services) and had thus been unable to make recommendations.

With regard to evaluation, the Committee had examined five reports of the Internal Oversight Services. It had commended the Office on its thorough evaluation of statistical activities and endorsed its recommendations, on the understanding that the Director of the Statistical Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis would propose a plan and a timetable for the implementation of those recommendations to the 1998 meeting of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission. The Committee had also expressed appreciation for the quality of the report of the bureau on the comprehensive evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and had considered that the Department's activities should remain within its mandate, which was primarily one of coordination. It had considered that the report, together with the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, should be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its next session. The Committee had noted with satisfaction that, in his reform programme, the Secretary-General had taken account of the need for a clear distinction between coordination functions and operational activities. The Committee had selected the following six topics for future in-depth evaluation: international drug control and crime prevention and criminal justice (1998), disarmament and electoral assistance (1999) and global development trends and the advancement of women (2000).

The Committee had also taken note of the overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and had requested that future reports should be analytical rather than descriptive and that ACC should in future take into account the orientations given by the Secretary-General in the foreword. It had considered that ACC should continue as a policy and action-oriented instrument and focus on the strategic objectives established in the Charter, by the General Assembly and in the medium-term plans of the organizations of the system. The Committee had underscored the need for resource mobilization as a key element in ensuring the success of the

United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. In that connection, the Committee had taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development and of his interim report of the implementation of the Special Initiative. It had noted with concern the proliferation of initiatives on Africa and stressed that neither the Plan of Action nor the Special Initiative solved the question of financial resources. It had recommended that, in order to assist in establishing a functional linkage between the New Agenda and the Special Initiative, the latter should henceforth be referred to as the "United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s". The Committee had called on the Secretary-General to rationalize and enhance the coordination mechanisms of the system and recommended that future reports should be more substantive and comprehensive.

The Committee had also endorsed most of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) contained in its report on coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation and had decided to submit the report, together with ACC's comments, to the Council and the General Assembly.

In conclusion, he recalled that, while some Member States questioned the Committee's usefulness, it had taken the initiative on the new format of the budget and the medium-term plan and for the adoption of a system of accountability. It had an important mandate and the Fifth Committee was currently examining proposals to strengthen it. Member States should try to make better use of it.

Mr. KHAN (Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs), introducing the overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1996 (E/1997/54), said that, in 1996, ACC had focused its activities on a limited number of issues which the Council had already had an opportunity to consider at its current session. The Council had discussed the follow-up to the major international conferences on the basis of the work of the three ad hoc task forces set up by ACC to ensure the coordination of follow-up. Within the framework of its high-level debate on fostering an enabling environment for development, it had also considered the issue of African economic development and, in particular, the Special

Initiative on Africa which ACC had launched and whose implementation it had followed in 1996. In addition to those issues, ACC had continued to consider the system's reform process and had adopted a joint statement on reform, which was contained in annex I to its report and defined the primary objectives towards which it intended to direct its efforts. Lastly, it had focused its work on operational activities for development on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/120 and had drawn up a plan for its implementation. ACC was now awaiting guidelines from the Council on its further activities.

Mrs. KIRSCH (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it was regrettable that the reports of the coordination bodies as a whole had not been available on time. She shared the Secretary-General's opinion that ACC had an important role to play in the current reform process. She commended the decision taken by ACC to make more systematic use of the existing inter-agency and consultative committees to avoid overlapping and facilitate cooperation. She hoped that the efforts made at the inter-agency level to prepare common accounting standards and to harmonize the presentation of financial reports would produce tangible results. She commended the prominence ACC continued to give to Africa on its agenda. The Committee's role - a framework for inter-agency coordination - was particularly important to the work of the Economic and Social Council - the linchpin of intergovernmental coordination within the United Nations system. That explained the importance of ensuring the highest possible level of interaction, complementarity and transparency between those two bodies. At the Council's 1995 substantive session, the European Union had suggested that ACC should submit specific issues linked to coordination, as well as concrete recommendations, to the Council, in its report. It regretted that its suggestion had not been adopted. An independent review of the role and functions of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), suggested in the report, should also lead to recommendations on JIU's future role. She favoured JIU observing the principle of zero nominal budgetary growth. Lastly, she would have appreciated more detailed information on the results of the review of ACC's subsidiary machinery.

Mrs. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Observer for Ghana) said that she attached considerable importance to the work of CPC, which was the principal subsidiary

organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination. At a time of reform and renewal of the Organization, the report of CPC drew the Council's attention to a number of important issues. The first was the impact of the approved savings measures on the implementation of mandated programmes and activities for the biennium 1996-1997. The Secretary-General's frank and courageous report on that subject, contained in document A/C.5/51/53, clearly showed that, contrary to the assurances given, the economy measures would have a negative impact. The situation was extremely disturbing, as it challenged the very purpose of the Organization, undermined the authority of the legislative organs and distorted the implementation of mandates. Her delegation shared the view of many other delegations referred to in CPC's report that economy measures should enhance the system's efficiency and not undermine it and should not absolve Member States from discharging their treaty obligations. Her delegation urged the General Assembly to take account of the profoundly negative impact of the economy measures when adopting the programme budget for 1998-1999. The use of gratis personnel was incompatible with the provisions of the Charter and the Staff Regulations and Rules. It jeopardized the Organization's international nature and undermined the principle of equitable geographical distribution. As many delegations had stated, the reform and restructuring of UNCTAD had been completed with the decisions taken at UNCTAD IX. In future, UNCTAD needed to consolidate its reformed structure. A better balance should be restored between UNCTAD's resources under the regular budget and the estimated extrabudgetary resources, increasing reliance on which was a matter of concern. Her delegation endorsed CPC's general support for the regional commissions' programmes of work and budget proposals for the biennium 1998-1999 and underscored the need to decentralize some resources to the regional commissions. It also attached great importance to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, the political framework for which was provided by the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It unreservedly endorsed CPC's recommendation that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa should henceforth be referred to as the "United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s". It also welcomed the clear

demarcation of the responsibilities of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least-Developed Countries, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which should facilitate the evaluation of performance and delivery under the System-wide Special Initiative. Her delegation appealed to the donor community to increase their assistance to the System-wide Special Initiative. Lastly, her delegation believed that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) should be strengthened, taking into account, in particular, the reform measures proposed by the Secretary-General.

Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh) said that he welcomed the work done by ACC, which had reached a consensus on virtually all sections of the programme budget. He wished to know how the sharp drop in resources resulting from the savings approved could not fail to have an impact on the performance of the planned activities and programmes, as the Secretary-General had asserted, or on the timetable for their implementation, which should also be complied with. CPC's mandate was an important one and it discharged its task commendably. He asked what its role should be in the future, particularly in the light of the proposed reform process. ACC also had an important role to play in that process in terms of coordination and management. In the interests of efficiency, relations between ACC and the Member States should be strengthened.

Mr. NEBYENZIA (Russian Federation) said that he shared the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his foreword to the report of ACC that ACC should be more than a symbol of unity and that a new system-wide culture should emerge. His delegation welcomed the Committee's useful work on development in Africa, its follow-up to major international conferences and operational activities for development and believed that it should continue its activities related to assistance for countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter. The involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in ACC's work should be strengthened. His delegation would also like to hear ACC's assessment of the efficiency of the various measures adopted to provide more integrated secretariat support to its machinery. It again stressed that the Council should have before it not only the ACC annual overview report, but also, between substantive sessions, the reports of its subsidiary organs.

His country regretted that delegations had been unable to discuss the CPC report in detail because they had not received it well enough in advance. It was convinced that CPC could make a valuable contribution to the work of the Council.

Mr. HYNES (Canada) said that he joined the representative of the European Union in regretting the late submission of the CPC report to the Council. He noted that the Committee's recommendations were addressed mainly to the General Assembly and that the Council could thus only take note of the report. He also regretted that CPC had been unable to reach a consensus on the section of the programme budget relating to human rights and hoped that it would be adopted by the General Assembly without any major problems. Canada supported the Secretary-General's proposals on the human rights programme and those on restructuring. It welcomed the work ACC had done on follow-up to conferences and reforms. An efficient ACC was essential to the pursuit of the common goals of the United Nations system and he shared the opinion of the representative of the Russian Federation that relations between ACC and the Council should be improved. To that end, he suggested that the Secretary-General or his representatives should organize informal information meetings for the Council or its bureau immediately after each meeting of ACC.

Mr. STOCKL (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said he deplored the fact that the members of the Council had not had time to study the CPC report properly. In reply to the representative of Bangladesh, he said that it was not CPC's role to discuss Secretariat reform: the issue came before it only indirectly, in the form of the revised budget estimates submitted by the Secretary-General, which gave the planned reforms in figures. The reforms were the direct responsibility of the General Assembly. It was also not up to CPC to decide whether the implementation of all the programmes and activities listed in the programme narrative was possible, in the light of the anticipated savings. It merely considered the programme narrative and it was the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) which examined the amounts listed and decided whether the programmes approved by CPC could be carried out within the limit of the amounts allocated by the Secretary-General. The final answer to the question asked by the representative of Bangladesh could be given only by the General Assembly, after it had considered two factors: the

programme narrative and budget allocations. Like the representative of Canada, he regretted that CPC had been unable to reach an agreement on the section of the programme narrative relating to human rights. He nevertheless pointed out that the budget process was only in the first stage. Perhaps delegations required more time to complete their negotiations and he had every hope that, after the budget had been reviewed by the General Assembly, the programme on human rights would be adopted without any difficulty.

Mr. KHAN (Division for Policy Coordination and ECOSOC Affairs) said that improved interaction between ACC and key intergovernmental organs, particularly the Council, was also one of ACC's major concerns, to which the Secretary-General had paid a great deal of attention. The subsidiary bodies of ACC reported to the subsidiary organs of the Council - for example, ACC's task forces reported to the Council's functional commissions. Nevertheless, those links should be further strengthened and he took note of the suggestion by the representative of Canada in that regard. Replying to the representative of the Russian Federation, he said that ACC's operations had improved considerably in the past 15 years. It now met for only two days, one and a half of which were devoted to the major general policy questions whose coordination was of importance to the system as a whole. ACC took ad hoc initiatives on those questions, which it brought to the attention of Governments, and would continue to do so, as indicated in the joint statement contained in annex I to its report, in which it identified approximately 10 objectives on which it intended to focus its contribution to the reform process in the period ahead. The issue of strengthening ACC's capacity and its links with the Economic and Social Council would again be considered at its autumn meeting. Replying to a remark by the representative of the European Union, he drew attention to Part One of the ACC report, which listed the key issues for consideration by intergovernmental bodies. All those issues had been considered by the Council, providing further proof that the link between the two bodies was better than in the past.

REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES (agenda item 7) (continued)

(a) ECONOMIC QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

The PRESIDENT invited the representative of Chile to introduce draft resolution E/1997/L.39 entitled "Consumer protection".

Mr. GÁLVEZ (Chile), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Consumer protection" (E/1997/L.39) on behalf of Brazil, Chile, Japan and Malaysia, recalled that, in resolution 1995/53, the Council had requested the Secretary-General to elaborate guidelines in the area of sustainable consumption patterns and to examine the possible extension of those guidelines into other areas and said that, in the draft resolution under consideration, the Council would urge member States, other entities of the United Nations system and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue efforts to implement effectively the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and to continue further work on the elaboration of guidelines to cover sustainable consumption patterns and other areas. As the review of the guidelines had not yet begun, the Council would recommend that the interregional expert group meeting elaborate specific guidelines for sustainable consumption patterns for submission to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998.

(c) SOCIAL QUESTIONS (E/1997/L.23 and Add.1):

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/1997/17)

Mr. WALZER (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing the report of the High Commissioner (E/1997/17), said that he would supplement it with indications on the activities carried out by UNHCR since the report had been completed on 31 March 1997. The total population of concern to UNHCR had fallen and should be revised. It stood at 21.8 million persons, of whom 13.2 million were refugees, 3.3 million returnees in the early stages of their reintegration, 3.9 million internally displaced persons and 1.4 million other persons of humanitarian concern, for the most part victims of conflict. There was a growing awareness of the need for a comprehensive and, above all, integrated approach to the problems arising from large-scale refugee flows and population displacements caused by the numerous conflicts which had broken out in recent years. UNHCR remained deeply concerned about the restrictive interpretation of the right to asylum in many regions and particularly in the African Great Lakes region, where it was absolutely vital to separate armed elements from refugees in order to preserve the civilian nature of refugee camps. In the same region, UNHCR had frequently had to intervene during the previous year and the situation was evolving at a rapid pace. Since the beginning of 1997, UNHCR had repatriated

more than 170,000 Rwandan refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 53,000 of whom had been repatriated in a complex airlift operation. The major challenge still facing UNHCR in the region was the search for Rwandan and Burundian refugees who were still widely scattered throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in neighbouring countries.

In Rwanda, the security situation had deteriorated, particularly in the western part of the country, but repatriation remained the preferred option. Because of the insecurity in Burundi, UNHCR restricted its activities to providing assistance to over 128,000 Burundians who had returned home from exile since November 1996. UNHCR was also assisting internally displaced persons returning to the northern provinces.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR was assisting 408,000 refugees, including 95,000 Congolese who were reported to be ready to return home. The remainder of the refugees were an ever-increasing number of Burundians. In addition, UNHCR was seeking to repatriate the approximately 10,000 Rwandan refugees grouped in the north east of the Republic of the Congo, but it was severely hindered by the fighting spreading to the whole area around Brazzaville. In addition, refugees had fled from Brazzaville to Kinshasa, where UNHCR had begun to provide them with assistance. Several thousand refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with a number of Rwandans, had also recently sought asylum in the Central African Republic. Arrangements were being made to define their status and UNHCR was helping the Government of Central Africa to find solutions.

In Sierra Leone, UNHCR had been compelled to suspend all activities following the military coup d'état in May 1997 and was currently reinforcing its reception capacity in neighbouring countries, especially in Guinea, where new arrivals had joined an existing population of a quarter of a million Sierra Leonean refugees.

In contrast, there were signs of a solution in several other countries in West Africa, particularly Liberia and Mauritania. In northern Uganda, however, attacks on local as well as refugee populations had resulted in widespread displacement. Fortunately, in the Horn of Africa and in East Africa, there were hopes of a durable solution and voluntary repatriation operations had gathered momentum at the beginning of 1997. UNHCR planned to repatriate more than 30,000 Somali refugees before the end of 1997 in an

operation that should be facilitated through closer cooperation with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), with which UNHCR had signed a memorandum of understanding in June 1997. In contrast, the repatriation of more than 132,000 Eritrean refugees from the camps in Sudan was still at a standstill.

The year 1997 should be decisive in Angola because, in April, more than 96,000 refugees had returned spontaneously. Nevertheless, progress towards political reconciliation had been slower than anticipated and UNHCR might be compelled considerably to reduce or suspend the activities of its field offices, particularly since funds for repatriation operations were lacking. Furthermore, the southern African subregion was experiencing a steady increase in arrivals of urban refugees, many of whom had passed through several other countries. However, the distinction between refugees, asylum-seekers and illegal migrants was often blurred, making it necessary carefully to coordinate and harmonize protection and assistance activities. In that respect UNHCR was increasingly playing a role in advocacy, capacity-building and coordination.

UNHCR had also had to deal with new emergency situations in other regions, particularly northern Afghanistan. It had committed itself to assisting the Governments of the five Central Asian Republics in managing those problems and the High Commissioner had received assurances that borders would remain open. In South America, the situation had grown more tense and the violence, particularly in Colombia, had generated new waves of large-scale internal displacement, as well as flight abroad. Accordingly, UNHCR was continuing its efforts to enhance its emergency capability and systematize its partnerships to ensure maximum effectiveness.

The search for durable solutions was a fundamental aspect of UNHCR's mandate and, at the end of 1996, the Office had been assisting approximately 2.3 million returnees out of a total of 3.3 million, although many of them, even if they had returned voluntarily, faced an unstable situation in their country. That was the case of the 51,000 refugees who had been repatriated in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1 January and the end of June 1997 and who had encountered numerous obstacles to reintegration in the so-called minority areas. UNHCR had taken the initiative of settling them in "open cities", which were prepared to accept the return of former inhabitants regardless of

their ethnic origin. In Croatia, UNHCR continued to facilitate the return of ethnic Serbian refugees and displaced persons, although, despite the tripartite agreement between the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), UNHCR and the Croatian Government, repatriation had been far more limited than anticipated.

In Afghanistan, UNHCR hoped that the amnesty proclaimed by the Taliban in Kabul would encourage the repatriation of refugees from Pakistan and Iran. It was also trying to persuade the new authorities to remove the restrictions on the employment of women and the education of girls. The peace accords signed at Moscow in June 1997 should facilitate the repatriation of the Tajik refugees still in northern Afghanistan and of those in the neighbouring Central Asian Republics and other States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

UNHCR was even more encouraged by developments in the situation in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as in eastern Asia and the Pacific, where the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA) had been officially concluded in 1996.

For a number of years, the search for durable solutions had also taken on a preventative dimension, which UNHCR was developing essentially in the Commonwealth of Independent States, where it was conducting a programme of action in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, States were not proving as generous in their commitment as UNHCR had anticipated and it was possible that the programme might not be fully completed.

UNHCR was working to build effective partnerships: following the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF at the beginning of 1997, it had revised the memoranda concluded with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and had signed a framework for cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as a memorandum of understanding with IOM in May 1997. It had also sought to enhance its relations with NGOs by allowing them broader access to its regular Standing Committee meetings. In addition, further progress had recently been made towards improving management through the "Delphi" project whereby an institutional reform process had been introduced since the end of 1995. The key principles of the relevant plan of action, essentially involving the

"situational approach" to decision-making, greater focus on achieving durable solutions, better integration of protection and assistance, improved implementing arrangements, effective monitoring and self-evaluation and control, were being reinforced.

UNHCR realized that, over the past year, it had made heavy demands on both donors and countries of asylum; nevertheless, the programmes launched in the former Yugoslavia, the CIS countries and various voluntary repatriation programmes in Africa had suffered from the lack of funds and support for the general programmes. By 23 June 1997, UNHCR had received a total of US$ 482 million against General and Special Programmes requirements of US$ 1.2 billion. More than ever before, it required the vigorous support of the international community.

Narcotics (E/1997/28, 48, 56)

Mr. GHODSE (President of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)) described the difficulties encountered by INCB in implementing the Council's decisions and the lack of cooperation of some Governments, which did not participate as they should in international drug control. In March 1997, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had adopted a resolution encouraging States to adopt effective legislation and to introduce adequate procedures for investigating and prosecuting traffickers. States would discuss the issue at the special session of the General Assembly in June 1998.

He drew the Council's attention to the fact that the sanctions applied to drug traffickers were far heavier than those applied to traffickers in the precursor chemicals used in clandestine drug manufacture. Chemical manufacturers who were found guilty received administrative fines that were so low as to have no deterrent effect at all. In addition, States applied different penalties to trafficking in those chemicals. Nevertheless, at the national level, penalties for the diversion of chemicals should act as an effective deterrent, while, at the international level, legislation should be harmonized to prevent traffickers from taking advantage of countries where penalties were lighter.

The Council had before it a draft resolution adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs entitled "Demand for and supply of opiates for medical and scientific needs". Hitherto, INCB had been in a position to prevent the proliferation of the licit production of opiates and exports of

pharmaceuticals manufactured from seized opiates. It trusted that States would comply with the provisions of the resolution and refrain from contributing to the multiplication of licit drug production. His reason for making such a comment before the Council was that a number of countries failed to comply with their treaty obligations in that regard and their cooperation left much to be desired. Some of them nevertheless requested and received assistance from the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and from other institutions, as well as from bilateral donors. However, their cooperation was not improving. After having carefully studied the situation, INCB believed that, should the situation persist, it would formally have to notify the Council of the countries concerned in its annual report. The provision of further technical assistance to the countries in question would also have to be reviewed.

Any national drug control strategy should be designed to reduce illicit demand. Long-term prevention campaigns did not yield immediate results and were therefore often considered politically unappealing. However, they were more necessary than ever, particularly because of the widespread trend to glamorize drugs which was apparent in the new cannabis fashion in some European countries and which obscured the dangers and condemned the drug prevention initiatives taken by Governments and the efforts of the World Health Organization to failure. It was essential to counteract the misleading information provided and the distorted image of drugs. INCB would discuss that issue in part of its 1997 annual report.

Social development (A/52/183-E/1997/74, E/1997/15, 26, 103, 104)

Mr. ADAMETS (Acting Director of the International Bureau for Education), introducing the progress report on the implementation process of the education for all objectives (A/52/183-E/1997/74), summarized the assessment made at the meeting held in Amman in mid-December 1996 by the International Consultative Forum on Education for All. Since the 1990 Jomtien Conference, enrolment in primary education in all developing countries had grown by 50 million pupils, 33 million of whom were in south Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa. Net enrolment ratios stood at 66 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and almost 99 per cent in Latin America and east Asia. The proportion of girls enrolled in primary education had risen from 43.4 per cent to 45.8 per cent. At the beginning of the decade, there had been a total of

128 million children who did not have a place in school; in 1995, there had been no more than 110 million. Early-learning programmes for children aged from three to six were developing almost everywhere and one out of five children in that age group were enrolled in such programmes; their share of national education budgets amounted to 4 per cent. In all the developing regions, with the exception of south Asia, public expenditure as a percentage of GNP had grown. Donors had also allocated a larger share of their aid to education. Simultaneously, efforts had been made to improve the quality of education and to provide it for children at risk through programmes combining education, health and nutrition.

Although the achievements were undeniable, they remained slow. That was particularly true in the case of girls, who were still globally at a disadvantage in comparison with boys. Two thirds of illiterate adults were women. In many countries, the quality of education offered left much to be desired and the poor quality of the teaching material was an obstacle to learning. The deteriorating status of teachers was another disturbing phenomenon. The absence of bridges between formal and non-formal education, the underuse of the media and inadequate funding, with education accounting for only 2.8 per cent of the GNP of the least developed countries, were hampering progress towards education for all.

Those mixed results illustrated the need to intensify efforts to make education accessible to girls and women, to find more resources for basic education, to improve the content of teaching and teaching methods, to provide teachers with decent living and working conditions and to reinforce partnerships with all those involved in education and all components of society at large, particularly through an open dialogue between local communities and the educational community.

In response to the new challenges which had emerged since 1990, basic education for all was more than ever before a central concern for UNESCO. The report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century had advocated permanent education, open to the world of work and to others. The forty-fifth session of the International Conference on Education in 1996 had focused on the role of teachers in a changing world. In its declaration, adopted in July 1997, the fifth International Conference on Adult Education had stressed the link between adult education and democracy.

Making basic education available to all and improving its quality remained one of the primary goals of UNESCO's programme and budget for 1998-1999. In conformity with that approach, the measures taken would first of all focus on those who were neglected by education and on groups and categories whose needs were greatest: girls, marginalized youth, Africa, the least developed countries and the nine high-population developing countries.

Crime prevention and criminal justice (E/1997/30)

Mr. KHELIL (President of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice), introducing the report on the work of the sixth session of the Commission (E/1997/30), said that the Commission had discussed a number of important issues reflecting the overriding concerns of Member States and that its debates had highlighted the need to strengthen international cooperation in the areas in question.

The Commission had submitted 5 draft resolutions for adoption by the General Assembly and 10 draft resolutions for adoption by the Economic and Social Council. It had also adopted a resolution which it had brought to the attention of the Council. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 51/120, the Commission had considered the question of the elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime, on the basis of proposals put forward by Poland. Most participants had recognized the need for such an instrument, which should not be a mere declaration of intent, but should contain specific measures for implementation. The draft resolution on that issue provided for the establishment of an inter-sessional open-ended intergovernmental group of experts to elaborate a preliminary draft convention and to report on its work to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its seventh session.

The Commission had finalized the items that would appear on the agenda of the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, due to take place in the year 2000. It was also submitting to the General Assembly a draft resolution on violence against women, containing Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Referring to the draft resolutions submitted to the Council, he said that the draft resolution relating to Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme made provision, in particular, for the establishment of an advisory steering group that would be responsible for specific tasks connected with the computerization of criminal justice statistics. Under the draft resolution on firearms regulation, the Secretary-General would publish a study on the topic and seek the views of the Member States and of the competent authorities on the development of a declaration of principles governing the use and carrying of firearms. Where illicit trafficking in motor vehicles was concerned, the Commission had approved the Moscow Declaration and a Model Bilateral Treaty for the Return of Stolen or Embezzled Vehicles. The draft resolution on the administration of juvenile justice contained Guidelines whose adoption would facilitate the implementation by the international community of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The other draft resolutions concerned the victims of crime and abuse of power, the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security and international cooperation for the improvement of prison conditions. Lastly, the draft resolution on technical cooperation and international advisory services highlighted the growing needs for assistance of the least developed countries, the developing countries, countries with economies in transition and countries emerging from conflict, in response to a rising crime level that was undermining their efforts to consolidate democracy. The Commission had set up an informal consultative group on resource mobilization in order to meet those needs.

It was to be hoped that the Council would provide the Commission with all the desired support to enable it to contribute, within the framework of the restructuring announced by the Secretary-General, to the establishment in Vienna of an effective centre to combat crime and terrorism.

Mr. CASTRO GUERRERO (Colombia) said that Colombia was particularly sensitive to the question of narcotics. It had taken an active part in the meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and had applied the measures decided by the international community, as reflected in the number of drug seizures in Colombia in 1996 (6 million doses). However, that effort had not been matched by a comparable reduction in demand in the consumer countries, quite the contrary. Colombia supported the preparatory steps for the special session which the General Assembly was due to hold on the issue in 1998, on

the understanding that it would advocate the strengthening of international cooperation on the basis of three principles: joint responsibility of all States, comprehensive efforts, equality.

Colombia looked to the international community for more resolute action in the following areas: reduction of demand, supervision of chemical precursors, including those used to manufacture heroin, the improvement of judicial cooperation machinery, rational strategies to eliminate illegal cultivation and to implement substitution programmes, and the strengthening of multilateral machinery to combat drug trafficking.

At a time of market liberalization, the problem of drug trafficking would not be solved by unilateral coercive measures. Only concerted efforts by all countries would make it possible to eliminate the scourge.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.